This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Jud
6945
581.235

WIDENER
HN SBXH 0

Jud 6945.581.235

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY

THE DEINARD COLLECTION

GIVEN BY

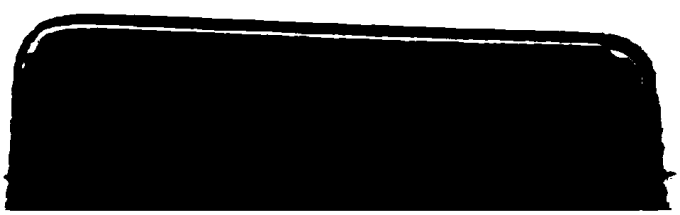
LUCIUS NATHAN LITTAUER

(Class of 1878)

IN MEMORY OF HIS FATHER

NATHAN LITTAUER

January 23, 1930



MOSES MAIMONIDES

by

ISRAEL FRIEDLAENDER, PH. D.

Professor of Bible and Jewish Philosophy

at

the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

NEW YORK,

1905.

Reprinted from the New Era Illustrated Magazine, January, 1905.

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
GIFT OF
LUCIUS NATHAN LITTAUER
1930

Jud 6975.581.295

An address delivered at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, December 28, 1904 at the commemoration of the seven hundredth anniversary of the death of Maimonides.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY LIBRARY DEC 3 1970

WHEN the generation after Maimonides moulded its opinion of him in the famous epigram: "Mimoshe we 'ad Moshe lo kom k'Moshe"—"From Moses till Moses there was none like Moses"—and thus put Moshe ben Maimun on the same line with Moshe ben Amram—its intention was not only to emphasize the overwhelming greatness of Maimonides, but rather to accentuate his exceptionality. Just as Moses, according to the conception of Maimonides differed from the other prophets not in degree, but essentially, so the greatness of Maimonides differed from that of other great men in Jewish history, not in degree, but in essence.

Maimonides was the greatest Jewish thinker, the greatest Jewish scholar, perhaps the greatest Jewish writer and one of the greatest Jewish characters—but the exceptionality of Maimonides which made posterity compare him with Moses, "the man of God," lies elsewhere, lies in the fact that he, like Moses, took up the gigantic problem of Judaism in its totality and tried to solve it in its totality. Maimonides was one of the most many-sided personalities in Jewish history—for he was also a famous physician and a great mathematician and astronomber—and to give an appropriate idea of the activity of Maimonides to its full extent, in the narrow limits of a lecture, were an achievement possible only for the unparalleled systematic mind of a Maimonides. Therefore, I may be allowed on the solemn occasion offered by our cele-

bration to-night to discuss the exceptional features of Maimonides and merely to touch on the others in passing.

When Maimonides appeared on the scene, the sun of the Jewish-Arabic period had already passed its zenith. For more than four centuries had this sun shed its light on the Jews, bringing thousands of germs to blossom, ripening a rich harvest on which we still feed to-day. Enormous were the fruits and multifarious. The spiritual inheritance of Judaism was investigated in all directions. The science of Judaism sprang up in incomparable beauty. The Bible, the Hebrew language, Hebrew poetry, the Talmud, the Halakha—all became the objects of most careful and most successful study. On the other side the thoughts and spiritual achievements of the period were most intimately dealt

with, and many attempts toward their reconciliation with the content of Judaism were undertaken. Maimonides, who surpassed all his predecessors in ability and learning, surpassed them all in his results. He made the whole spiritual wealth of the period his own possession. In the field both of Jewish learning and of non-Jewish thought he brought the attempts to perfection. He was a greater scholar, a greater philosopher than all his predecessors, but the feature that distinguishes him from all others and constitutes his exceptionability is that, differing from all of them, he undertook with perfect consciousness the task to utilize learning and thought for life. We are accustomed in our days to boast of being in possession of a pure science, an unconditioned philosophy, both independent of time and space and taking no regard to the interests of life.

At bottom, however, this is but self-delusion. Science and philosophy are born of the human intellect which, consciously or unconsciously, is influenced by human emotions, these in their turn being dictated by life. Not that Maimonides intended to falsify science and philosophy for the interests of life, but his genial eye perceived the invisible threads running from the abstract domain of thought to the firm soil of reality, and he transformed the dead mass of learning into living energy. In this way he promoted the real interests of learning. For, as our sages say, "Great is the learning which calls forth practical work," or as the founder of modern Jewish science (Zunz) puts it: "Wahre Wissenschaft ist thatenerzeugend"—"real learning brings forth great deeds."

And life at that time did present for

the Jewish people a great problem. It was neither more nor less than the question of the preservation of Judaism. The sun of the period had passed its zenith not only in spiritual, but also in political, life. The Islam, one of whose chief commandments was the "jihâd," the fight against the unbelievers, was infinitely kinder toward the Jews than was Christianity with its theoretical basis of human love. But in course of time the Mohammedans learned from the Christians. A period of persecutions began. The fanatical Almohades, the "Unitarians" of the Islam, arose in Northern Africa and compelled Unbelievers to choose between expulsion and conversion. In southern Arabia, in Yemen, the conditions were the same. In most Christian countries the Jews were scarcely happier. Everywhere the conditions were unsafe, and the

welfare of the Jews depended upon the whim of the rulers. Heavy storms were approaching. The task was to equip the ship of Jewry so that she might resist the coming gale. There was sufficient, yea, abundant provision available. But the question was how to make the best use of it.

We do not know as we should like to know them the spiritual conditions of the time of Maimonides. But as far as we can judge from the writings of Maimonides himself, there were three different classes of people. First the bulk of the people, ignorant and stolid. Ignorance of Judaism certainly was not yet so fashionable nor so profound as nowadays; still, the Jews of his day did not appear sufficiently equipped for a stubborn resistance. Almost all of them read and understood the Pentateuch, but this was all. They were

ignorant of the whole field of Jewish tradition and in their practical life were slavishly dependent upon the Talmudists. These in turn formed a second class. They were absorbed in the hair-splitting discussions of the Talmud and lacked all understanding of the needs of their time or the thoughts of their period. Their Judaism was confined in the "four ells of the Halakha," and, excluded from light and air, became damp and mouldy. Finally there were the thinkers who had appropriated the content both of Judaism and the non-Jewish philosophy, but were unable to bring them into harmony with each other. The heterogeneous elements were constantly struggling with one another, and the inner conflict created a split in their whole spiritual life and so destroyed their energy and their powers of resistance.

At that moment, Maimonides made his appearance, and with the might of his genius brought help and salvation to all classes, leading them along a level way to the sources of Judaism, presenting to them a comprehensive system of Jewish thought and practice, showing them the unity between religion and philosophy, and so enabling them to face with confidence the persecutions that were to come. We are hardly in a position to realize fully what Maimonides was to the Jews of his time. When, this day seven hundred years ago, on the 20th of Tebet, 4965, the Jews, having ordered a public fast, read in their synagogues the chapter of the Pentateuch threatening the Jewish nation with awful disasters in case of disobedience, and recited from the Prophets the passage on the capture of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines, they conceived

the death of Maimonides as a national disaster and his disappearance as a capture of the Ark of the Covenant, the source of Divine information and inspiration.

At this place I should like to insert a few short remarks about the life and personality of Maimonides, so as to give a proper frame for his activity. Maimonides died at the age of almost seventy. He was born on the 14th of Nissan (30th of December) 1135, at one o'clock in the afternoon—the preservation of the exact date of his birth showing the importance which his contemporaries assigned to the event. He was born in Cordova of an aristocratic Jewish family that had furnished the community of Cordova with rabbis —then an unpaid and honorary post— for seven generations. His father was a well-educated man versed both in the sources of Judaism and in the sci-

ence and literature of the Mohammedans. His first education Maimonides probably received from his father, but he pursued and perfected it under Jewish and Mohammedan teachers. When Maimonides was thirteen years old, Cordova was conquered by the Almohades and his family were forced to flee from their native land. During the following years they had to be wanderers. A few years they resided in Fez, in Northern Africa, and for a short time sojourned in the Holy Land.

We have very little knowledge about these years of Maimonides' life. This lack of information, together with the eagerness of the Mohammedan writers to make this overwhelming personality one of their own, has created the belief that Maimonides embraced Islam outwardly. But this accusation, which, unfortunately enough, is shared

by some Jewish scholars, is entirely refuted by the mere fact that in the extremely vehement polemics which followed the death of Maimonides none of his opponents ever mentioned this pretended conversion which surely would have been an excellent weapon in the hands of his enemies. At any rate, Maimonides devoted these years of his life, as best he could, for the benefit of Judaism. For during his wanderings, he composeed—often, as he himself tells us, working at it while aboard ship, or sojourning at an inn—his first great work: the Commentary on the Mishnah. At last he established himself in Cairo, in the part called Fostat, under the tolerant sceptre of Saladin. After the death of his brother, with whom he was associated in the jewel trade, he made up his mind to utilize his great medical knowledge and gradually grew to be

a famous physician employed both by the court and all the classes of the population. In one of his letters he gives us a most vivid picture of this extensive practice which occupied him day and night and left him not even time for his meals. In spite of these absorbing professional duties, he was able—it sounds almost mysterious—to fulfil the functions of a rabbi—unpaid of course—to answer the numberless religious questions addressed to him from almost all over the world, and to compose his two other standard words: the Talmudical Code "Mishne Torah," and the philosophical treatise, "More Nebukhim," besides a number of other pamphlets on Jewish and secular topics. He had the satisfaction of having, in Yosef ibn Aknin, a pupil who worshipped him and nevertheless—understood him, and of seeing his only son Abraham,

born to him in his fiftieth year, grow up in his spirit and assume his ideals. He died when not yet seventy, of physical exhaustion, with the joyous conviction that he had faithfully done his duty toward his own generation and the generations to come.

The character of Maimonides is equalled only by his intellect. It represents a beautiful harmony between the perfect poise, the "sophrosyne" of the Greek philosopher, and the deep earnestness of the Jewish "Talmid Haham." Although theoretically conceiving the practical commandments of the Law as a means toward an end for the mass, he did not belong to the class of people who like religious practices only when performed by others, but he himself observed the ceremonial law with the greatest exactitude. He was indignant when somebody once charged him with not following a cer-

tain religious custom, even though he himself had declared it to be immaterial. "May Heaven and Earth witness for me that I never neglected it," he apologizes in one of his letters. "Why should I change my own custom and the custom of my fathers without a reason, when it is not contradicted by the Law?" His energy was invincible, else he had not been able to do the tremendous work he accomplished. He was always true to himself, and in his activity never paid any regard to the blame or praise of the people, but acted merely according to his innermost conviction. In spite of his fame he remained amiable, accessible to everybody, extremely modest, not with that kind of modesty which is only a refined form of vanity, but with that true modesty which measures its achievements not by the shortcomings of others but by the

greatness of its own task. He was aware that his legal code was the greatest achievement since the days of the Mishnah, he was firmly convinced that it would become the authoritative book of future generations, when the envy and jealousy of his contemporaries would have disappeared. But at the same time he decidedly refused to take any measures against the vain scholars in his own community who thought it beneath their dignity even to look at his code. "I shall never try to fight for my own sake. My dignity and the purity of my character are more of an honor for me than fighting the fools with my tongue and my speech." "You must know," writes Maimonides in one of his letters to his pupil, "that I am ready to yield, although it would do me much harm in the eyes of the multitude. And every one who tries to prove his own perfection by my im-

perfection, even if he be the last among the scholars—I forgive him readily." I could quote numerous passages of the same kind showing the admirableness and loveliness of Maimonides' character. But we have to return to our own subject and show in what way Maimonides acquitted himself of his task.

This task demanded enormous, unparalleled powers which could be found together only in Maimonides. First he had the incomparable learning, he who, during constant wanderings, and without having a book at his disposal, at the age of twenty-three, was able to compose his vast commentary on the Mishna, treating almost all branches of human knowledge. Maimonides was one of the greatest systematizers that ever lived. It is a common charge which, raised by non-Jews, is faithfully believed by Jews, that our people are most unsystematic. But had the Jews produced

only the one Maimonides, they would have proved the absurdity of this charge. Maimonides was a writer of extraordinary power and elegance. But Maimonides was much more. He was, and this is perhaps his greatest distinction, not only a logician but a psychologist. This is a most important point. Maimonides is usually considered a rationalist, and justly so. Reason, thinking, is the standard by which he measures everything. "Never should man," says Maimonides, in his answer to the Jews of Marseilles, "throw his reason behind him, for his eyes are not in back but in front." This follows necessarily from his system which declares thinking to be the ultimate destiny of mankind, and the only way of attaining to some share in Divine providence and immortality. He unreservedly follows his reason. Although fully aware that the accept-

ance of the theory of the "eternity of the world" taught by Aristotle is identical with the annihilation of all positive religion, he rejects this doctrine not on account of its being anti-religious, but on account of its not being sufficiently demonstrated. He speaks in sarcastic terms of the Mohammedan philosophers and their Jewish apers who are satisfied with an artificial reconciliation between Religion and Philosophy, and take the facts not as they are, but as they would like them to be.

But we would totally misapprehend the attitude of Maimonides and do him gross injustice if we were to consider him exclusively a rationalist. Maimonides declared reason to be the highest authority in philosophical and spiritual matters. But he was not one of those one-sided rationalists, those narrow-minded "maskilim" who consider man to be a thinking engine, a

reasoning automaton that responds only when a logical formula is thrown into it, who swear by the old horrible doctrine of Socrates that man has but to know virtue in order to practice it. Maimonides understood better than any one of his predecessors and contemporaries that human life is not ruled by thoughts and formulas but by emotions, that thoughts, therefore, first have to be transformed into emotions in order to become a real power in life. Just as the celestial spheres, according to the conviction of Maimonides, are able to move only after their logical contemplation of God has become a psychological desire for God, so human actions can be called forth not by the recognition of truth, but by the desire for truth. This perception marks Maimonides as a great pedagogue. For to be a pedagogue means to understand human nature, to be

able to put one's self into the soul of another, to require standards and make demands which he himself has outgrown. Maimonides learned his pedagogy from his great model Moses, whose activity he understood to be chiefly that of a pedagogue. Although the religious commandments have to be performed without any regard to reward or punishment he declares that "it does not matter if the multitude fulfils the commandments out of fear of punishment." A material conception of the future life is most repugnant to him, and he makes the greatest efforts to combat it. Still when a Jew of Bagdad who professed to be an uneducated man, asked him for an explanation of what the future life really meant, he replied: "As for your request to explain to you the immortality of the soul, in my various writ-

ings I have given all the explanations which are necessary, and I have tried my best to make it as intelligible as possible. But I should advise you not to occupy your mind with these deep questions, for the conception of incorporeal beings is extremely difficult even for great scholars—how much more for beginners who have no experience in these matters. You had better form for yourself an idea which you are able to understand. It will not injure your religiousness if you beliefe that those partaking in the future life are bodies, if but the belief in its existence becomes firmly established in your heart. Even if you believe that they eat, drink and beget their kind somewhere in the uppermost heaven or in Paradise, it will not do any harm to your faith. There are many thing which, in spite of their being more evident, people are ignor-

ant of, and still ignorance of them does not injure the principles of religious belief." Metaphysical thought according to Maimonides is the last goal of man. It gives him the greatest happiness, and it alone enables him to have a share in immortality and Divine providence. Still he warns the people again and again to keep aloof from metaphysics. Meat and wine are very good things in themselves, but they would probably have the most injurious effect upon the suckling, who is unable to digest them. The philosopher is allowed, is obliged, to search after the principles of religion, but the multitude is advised to stop at the question of the reasons of the ceremonies. By thus taking into consideration the various degrees in the human intellect, and applying to each of them individual treatment, he contributed more than any one else toward

spreading a philosophical conception of Judaism among the mass of the Jewish people.

His pedagogical principles betray themselves also in the details of his activity. Maimonides was an aristocrat through and through,—an aristocrat, however, who considers his rank not a prerogative but a duty. He was not only a high aristocrat by virtue of blood, his family claiming descent from King David, but first and foremost also an aristocrat by virtue of intelligence. The distinction between the *hamon* and the *yehidim,* the "mass" and the "select," is of most common occurrence in his writings. His philosophical system pays but little attention to the mass. "The mass," says Maimonides in the Introduction to his commentary on the Mishnah, "is created to serve the philosopher," to prepare for him the necessaries of

life. But his historical sense made Maimonides understand that the existence of a nation is based upon the masses, and that the preservation of Judaism depends at least as much on the education of the masses as on the philosophical contemplation of the "select." It is not mere chance but a necessary consequence of this perception that the first two standard works of Maimonides are devoted to the instruction of the masses, and only his third and last one appeals to the philosophers. The enormous scientific activity of Maimonides is entirely directed toward this one goal: the perpetuation of Judaism by making the people *understand,* and in understanding *love* Judaism, so enabling them to fight for it and suffer for it. In this aspect Maimonides' activity is eminently practical —practical in the sense not of responding to the petty interests of the day,

but of considering the needs of the age and of the generations to come. When still in his early "twenties," Maimonides saw the whole scheme of his activity before him. At an age when others are in the very *Sturm und Drang* period, his mind and character were perfectly mature and settled. Maimonides did not claim to be infallible. On the contrary he liked to take credit to himself for his readiness to confess his shortcomings and modify his statements as soon as he recognized them to be erroneous. But it was only in details that such modifications were ever necessary. As for his general aims, they never underwent a change, and just as his philosophical views remained the same during all his life, in spite of zealous and incessant study, so his literary works were the realization of a firmly established

scheme. In his first work are indicated the outlines of his last work, and in his last work he refers to his first. One trait more of Maimonides' incomparably systematic trend of mind. In the Introduction to his Commentary on the Mishna, of which we shall soon speak, he tells us that he had written explanations of the Talmud, and it is worth while noticing—he himself recalls this fact to us—that these explanations concerned themselves with the very tractates which had special application to the practical life of the Jew. However, his work of commenting the Talmud remained unfinished, and as much of it was finished is lost. Both circumstances are probably due to the fact that Maimonides laid no special stress on the spread of the Talmud. And here again we have the real Maimonides before us. Maimonides felt the deepest reverence and awe

for the Talmud and its teachers. He speaks in almost touching terms of their wisdom and their religiousness. His life was chiefly devoted to the study of the Talmud and entirely governed by Talmudical practice, and—"by their fruits ye shall know them"—his son, at the same time his disciple, was as least as much of a Talmudist as he was of a philosopher. His literary activity, however, was not ruled by his personal tastes and inclinations, but by the interests of Judaism. Looked at from this standpoint, the subtle and lengthy discussions of the Talmud, being a mental pleasure and a worthy object of religious study for the scholar, had but little value for the masses, who needed practical information in their everyday life. These considerations determined Maimonides to turn rather to another source of Judaism, itself a systematic conden-

sation of the mental activity of foregoing generations, and considered the holiest book after the Bible. So Maimonides undertook to interpret the Mishnah.

In course of time the Mishnah had become difficult and unintelligible. Its language, its objects and so forth were quite strange to the new generation. Besides, the editor of the Mishnah often put into his code several different opinions without giving the decision, and the decision was, of course, most important for religious practice. Maimonides took this task upon himself. His Commentary on the Mishnah, the result of ten years' indefatigable work, has remained unsurpassed to this very day. According to his disposition, Maimonides prefaces every new tractate by a comprehensive introduction, which in every word displays the

power of his genius. The whole Mishnah is introduced by a lengthy and careful treatise of great scientific value. In the single Mishnahs he gives a concise, yet complete interpretation of things and words and always indicates the decision which is to be followed in practical life. But at the same time he successfully pursued another end. The Mishnah often refers to matters of a scientific, moral or philosophical character. As soon as such an occasion presented itself, as soon as—to use Maimonides' own words—there was to be perceived but an odor of philosophy, he gladly seized the opportunity to develop in a most attractive and popular, but still profound and exhaustive, manner, the elements of other branches of learning, thus making his commentary not only a source of information for religious

practice, but also for religious thought and secular knowledge.

The next literary work of Maimonides presupposes this one. He takes up quite consciously the thread where Rabbi Yahuda Hanassi, the Redactor of the Mishnah, had dropped it. Just as the Mishnah presents a resumé of the activity of the generations preceding, so Maimonides intended to collate the results of his predecessors up to his own day. But the task was now an infinitely greater one. In the interval between Yahuda Hanassi and Maimonides, both Talmuds, that of Babylonia and that of Palestine, had sprung up, together with an enormous literature that partly accompanied, partly succeeded them. The material which was piled up during the centuries, without a plan and without a system, grew to unbounded limits. But it remained a

dead mass. Only very few were able to make themselves acquainted with it. The Jews of that time were too much occupied with practical life and varied interests to devote their lives to the study of this literature with the exslusiveness and self-denial that afterward became so prominent a feature in the Jews of Poland. And even the few were unable to take advantage of their studies. The material was without any unifying bond. It offered a mass of information, but no knowledge. So Maimonides conceived the gigantic scheme which meant no less than sifting, arranging and illuminating the entire immense material heaped up by all preceding generations, thus making superfluous the whole literature before him.

It is a gross injustice often done to Maimonides to accuse him of having the intention to supersede the Tal-

mud entirely In one of his letters he refutes this charge by referring to the fact that he himself was a zealous student of the Talmud, and delivered lectures on Talmudic subjects. He considered the Talmud as a most worthy object of study, but only for scholars. The people, however, are not scholars and cannot devote the whole of life to learning. For the mass of the people alone he intended to supersede the Talmud by a comprehensive extract from it. "In our times," he says in his introduction to the work of which we are now speaking, "disasters are continually following one another. The need of the moment sets aside every other thing. The wisdom of our wise men is lost and the learning of our learned men is hidden. Therefore all the interpretations, codes and responses which the Geonim composed and which they thought were

clear, have become unintelligible in our days, and there are but few who are able to understand them properly. As to the Talmuds themselves, both the Babylonian and the Palestinian, and the other Talmudic literature, I have no need to say that they require wide knowledge and great intelligence and a long time before anyone can find out the right way concerning all the things permitted and forbidden, and concerning all the other commandments of the Law. On account of this, I, Moses, the son of Maimun, the Spaniard, have girded my loins and put my trust in the Lord—blessed be He—and studied all these works and made up my mind to collect the results issuing from them, concerning the forbidden and the permitted, the pure and the impure, and all the other commandments of the Thora, all of them in precise

language and in a brief manner, so that the whole oral law may be made accessible to everyone, without the arguments and the counter-arguments, but in clear and intelligible words, according to the decision which can be gathered from all the treatises and interpretations existing since the days of Rabbi Yahuda Hanassi, the compiler of the Mishnah, to our present day; in short, so that no man shall need any other book referring to the law of Israel. For this reason I called this work *Mishne Thora,* the second Thora, for one has but to read first the Written Law and follow it up by this work in order to know the entire Oral Law without needing any book between them."

The significance of this gigantic work can hardly be overestimated. There are in this hall two gentlemen connected with our institution who to

a greater extent than myself are entitled and enabled to pass critical judgment on it. Allow me but to say that the "Second Law" of Maimonides is the greatest work in Jewish literature after the Bible. The difference between his code and the Talmud is the same as between a store of accumulated materials and a magnificent palace. In the store there is no doubt a great amount of valuable material; there is to be found silver, gold and very often even jewels. But all this makes the proper impression only if arranged in harmony with one another. The palace of Maimonides shows the marvelous architect. The tremendous edifice is, as it were, of one cast. There is a ravishing harmony in all its parts. The foundation consists of the broad conceptions of the Aristotelian system and the top loses itself in the lofty clouds of the

Messianic future when the "knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea."

With the completion of his legal code Maimonides had fulfilled his duty toward the multitude. Now they were completely provided for. They now had a criterion for their religious practice and a content for their religious thought. Equipped with the Bible and the Mishne Thora, the Jewish people could confidently continue its wanderings and face any persecution that might be approaching. Now there remained only the less important, yet a most sublime and most delicate, duty toward the "select." They were really Yehidim, single ones, "one out of a town, two out of a tribe," but the aristocrat Maimonides asserts that he cares more for one of these "select" then for ten thousand fools. The "select" devoted their lives to learn-

ing. They were rather familiar with Jewish literature, possessing at the same time a thorough knowledge of the science and philosophy of the age. These different elements were in constant struggle with one another. There was a wide breach in the souls of these men. They felt dissatisfied. They experienced spiritual torture, constantly wavering, as they did, between the two poles presented by the Aristotelian conception of God as self-thinking, and the anthropomorphistic narratives and positive commandments of the Bible and the Talmud. Many attempts had been made toward the reconciliation of the two spheres of thought. But they were not satisfactory. Either Aristotle or Judaism got the worst of it. This task could be performed—so far as it could be performed at all—only by one who, besides displaying incomparable power

of synthesis, mastered in an equally unparalleled way both Greek thought and the content of Judaism.

This task is undertaken and performed by Maimonides in his third great work, in his "Moreh Nebukhim," "The Guide of the Perplexed," a book that marks an epoch not only in the history of Jewish thought, but also in that of the general thought of the middle ages. The Moreh is written in the form of letters addressed to his pupil Yosef ibn Aknin. Maimonides proceeds most deliberately and cautiously. He describes his long hesitation before he determined to compose this book. He was not afraid of the attacks of the multitude which were likely to come, and actually did come. But what he really was afraid of was that the multitude might be harmed in its faith by this book. He therefore takes every possible precaution to keep

the masses away from his book. He implores his pupil not to lend his copy to anyone. He sets forth a long series of conditions which qualify one to read it. He makes the greatest efforts to be unintelligible, to speak in hints and allusions, though the logical mind of Maimonides was stronger than his intention and the clearness of this work is paralleled only by its depth. The Moreh contains, as stated above, the attempt at a reconciliation between the system of Aristotle and the doctrines of Judaism. Aristotle was for Maimonides the incarnation of human thought. He declares him to be "the ultimate station attainable by the intelligence of mankind." He often speaks of him as "the highest of those who ever philosophized," and calls him the "chief of the philosophers." He follows him with the utmost confidence, without any mental

reservation. Aristotle is the philosopher "kat' exokhen" for the whole period. But more than to any one else he was so to Maimonides, who in his whole disposition of mind may properly be called the Jewish counterpart of the Greek philosopher.

In order to understand the extent and importance of the problem, let me premise in a few rough strokes the main thoughts of Aristotle as they were modified by the ideas of the neo-Platonists, by the interpretations of the Arabic philosophers, and by the original and independent elaboration of Maimonides.

The underlying idea of the whole Aristotelian system is the conception of matter and form, or translated into adequate modern terms, matter and mind. Matter is but possibility or potentiality; mind is actuality. The constantly shifting combinations of

matter and mind constitute the movement, and so the process, of the world. Every movement has a cause; this cause another cause, and so on until we at last arrive at the First Cause, at the Cause of causes, at God. God is pure mind, pure actuality. He is the cause of movement, but, having no cause, is Himself unmoved: the unmoved Mover. God as pure mind can exercise only one activity: thinking. Being the perfect mind He can think only the perfect object: Himself. So God becomes personified Self-thinking. Naturally the question arises as to the relation of this abstract God to the world of matter with all its numberless phenomena. Aristotle simply sets aside this question by maintaining the co-existence, or the eternity of the world. Then, of course, God ceases to be the Creator or even the Ruler of the world, and

is no more than an impersonal abstract principle, "a pale cast of thought."

No positive religion with its beliefs and commandments can start from such a conception. Maimonides declares with perfect consciousness that the acceptance of the eternity of the world is identical with the destruction of all positive religion. Nevertheless he proudly refuses to take refuge in any glittering philosophic generality. In a cool and unbiassed manner he examines closely the foundations of this Aristotelian belief. He proves that this hypothesis of Aristotle was meant by Aristotle himself to be taken as no more than an hypothesis, and shows further, in a way that vividly reminds us of Kant, that there can never be any certainty about this question, the whole problem being, as Kant would say, transcendental, i. e., lying beyond the limits of the human under-

standing. Wherever human reason is incompetent the philosopher is entitled—and here again Maimonides is in agreement with Kant—to follow the teaching of religion. The world once created, then God is a Creator, a Ruler, no longer a faint, abstract principle, but a personal being, full of reality. So the foundation of positive religion is based upon philosophical probability, but a probability which by inner religious certitude, Kant would say by Practical Reason, is raised to the stage of an undoubted belief.

But how is the relation between God, the pure Mind, and the world of Matter to be conceived in detail? The reply to this question presupposes the cosmological system of Aristotle with the peculiar modifications and additions of the later philosophers. The world according to Aristotle, and, of course, according to Maimonides,

consists of two sharply marked parts: of the world under the moon, the so-called sublunar world, and the world above the moon, the world of the stars or the spheres. While the sublunar world consists of the four elements and is therefore subject to rise and decline, the spheres consist of ether and are eternal. The spheres are living beings, endowed with intelligence by far surpassing that of man. Every sphere has its own ruler, a Separate Intelligence, i. e., an intelligence which is separated from matter and consists of pure mind. The contemplation of God, the purest mind, and the desire to reach him puts the spheres into movement. This movement being circular, the spheres have to move in all eternity without being able to reach the object of their desire. The sublunar world or the earth is ruled by the

Active Intellect, i. e., that Separated Intelligence which is attached to the moon sphere. By the Active Intellect movement is produced in this world and potentiality developed into actuality. Everything in the sublunar world is perishable, man likewise. He falls asunder into his four elements. But in distinction from all other beings he is endowed with mind given to him as a mere disposition, and by human effort this disposition can be raised to actuality and developed into the Acquired Intellect. By the Acquired Intellect man is connected with the Active Intellect of the moon sphere and through the intercession of the latter with the Divine Being. So it depends upon man himself and upon his endeavors to develop his mind whether and to what extent he is connected with God, whether and to what extent he shares in

Divine Providence and Immortality. Development of mind means, of course, nothing more than thinking, thinking of the Highest, of God; in other words, metaphysics. So metaphysics becomes the final destiny of mankind. Though thinking is the ultimate goal of mankind, it nevertheless demands many lower activities for its realization. It demands, first, morality consisting in the "mesotes," the golden mean, in the balance between the two extremes, and then it demands the satisfaction of the needs of the body, which presupposes a social order. Only after fulfilling these conditions man is able to devote himself to thinking, to metaphysics. So morality and social order are justified as a substructure for philosophy.

So far the system of Aristotle in its general outlines. Even from these it becomes evident that the ideas of Aris-

totle are different from the teachings of the Bible with its vivid narratives and positive commandments. A reconciliation seems unthinkable.

Still Maimonides did achieve this apparently impossible synthesis. He was charged with hypocrisy. But he who maintains this charge does not in the least understand the convictions of Maimonides and his period and is not worthy even to utter the name of Maimonides. Maimonides was perfectly honest and consistent in trying to bring about this reconciliation. He was compelled to do so. For just as much as he was convinced of the truth of the Aristolelian system—nay, even to a greater extent was he convinced of the truth of the doctrine of Moses. Maimonides did not doubt for a moment during his whole life the Divine origin of the Thora. In the work of his early youth, in the commen-

tary on the Mishnah, he accentuates this belief with the utmost emphasis. "There is no difference, he says, with regard to the question of the Divine origin of the Pentateuch, between the verses: 'And the sons of Ham are Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan' or 'And the name of his wife was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred,' and the verses: 'I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the Land of Egypt' or 'Hear ye, Israel, the Lord our God is the only God.'" In our days this confession may sound surprising in the mouth of a man who declares Reason to be the judge of dogmas. But we must try to understand him from an historical point of view. No Jew preceding Maimonides, not even during the Jewish-Arabic period, in spite of its many philosophers, ever denied the Divine

origin of the Pentateuch or even doubted the truth of the facts reported by it. The philosopher Bahya ibn Pakuda, who lived a century before Maimonides, mentions a class of people who do not accept the Thora, but still "are unable to refute the wonders and deny the miracles performed by the prophets on account of their wide publicity" (Hoboth Halebaboth II, 4), and the heathen king of the Chazars in the philosophical dialogue by Bahya's contemporary, Yehuda Hallevi, after having heard from his opponent the tale about the Exodus from Egypt, exclaims enthusiastically: "This is really a Divine event, and all the ceremonies connected with it have to be performed, for there can be no question of sorcery or deceit or imagination. Granted that the Red Sea before their eyes, its being split and their

passage through it was a matter of imagination, how could their deliverance from slavery, the death of their oppressors and the fact of having appropriated their garments and keeping possession of their money—how could all this be taken as a matter of imagination? This is the attitude only of a stubborn sceptic" (Kusari, I, 84). Modern conception of history was entirely wanting. Literary criticism was perfectly unknown. But more than by the absence of negative indications the belief in the Thora was strengthened by positive influences. The conviction of the Divine origin of the Thora was not coldly abstracted from consumptive catechisms but impressed itself upon the mind of the Jew as the result of continual study and incessant practice of the Law. "This book of the Law really never departed out of his mouth,

but he meditated therein day and night that he might observe to do according to all that is written therein" (Joshua, I, 8). Under such circumstances even the "chief of the philosophers" failed to shake the psychological foundation of Jewish belief. The doctrine of Moses being as well absolute truth as that of Aristotle, the result, according to the mathematical formula: a = b, b = c, hence a = c, must be, that they are identical. It is evident that this identity of their contents could be established only by way of interpretation. Aristotle was too scientific and too logical to bear interpretation. So the suffering part could be only the Bible. But why does not Moses utter his truths as plainly as Aristotle? The answer is a most ingenious one. Man creates God in his own image. Maimonides, the excellent pedagogue who endeavors to keep back his philo-

sophical views from the immature multitude, discovers the same features in Moses. The Bible does not appeal, like the "Organon" of Aristotle, to a limited number of highly developed thinkers. The Bible is a popular book. It appeals to all the people in all its classes. "Gather the people together," says God unto Moses; "men and women and children . . . that they may hear . . . all the words of this Law" (Deuteronomy 31, 12). The Bible is both for the deepest philosopher and the unsophisticated child. Had the Thora expressed metaphysical truths in clear, plain terms, they would not only have been entirely unintelligible to the mass of the people, but, being misunderstood, they would have created confusion and mischief. Therefore the Thora preferred to put her views in the form of tales and allegories, which, taken by the multi-

tude in their literal sense and by the "select" in their real sense, exerted on both a religious influence differing in degree,but equally beneficial. This example set forth by Moses was followed up by the prophets and the Biblical writers, later on by the Jewish sages whose words as Maimonides expresses it, "are like a few bits of core enveloped by numerous husks, so that the people sometimes are absorbed in the husks and think there is no core at all" (Moreh 1, 71).

The methods by which Maimonides embodies the system of Aristotle in the Thora excite our utmost admiration. Here his synthetic genius celebrates its greatest triumphs. Many a time we must summon up all our modern scepticism in order to escape the net of allegorical explanation so skilfully laid by the hand of a master. Of course, in most cases, the interpretations of Mai-

monides impress us as being artificial and affected. Maimonides did not write for the twentieth century but for the Jews of the twelfth century. And for them, with a spiritual life akin to his own, with the same opinions, beliefs and inclinations, the allegorical interpretation of Maimonides was a revelation—a revelation bringing harmony to their minds and peace to their hearts.

* * *

"Mimoshe we 'ad Moshe lo kom k'Moshe": "From Moses till Moses there was none like Moses." Just as Moshe ben Amram so Moshe ben Maimun extended his gigantic and beneficent activity on all classes of his people. The blessings of his work poured down on the vast plains and the lonely summits. The loftiest thinker looked up to Maimonides with the same gratitude as the simplest man

of the mass. For this alone Maimonides deserves immortality.

Denn wer den Besten seiner Zeit
genug gethan,
Der hat gelebt fuer alle Zeiten. . .

But man is selfish. He measures the grandest phenomena of the past by the narrow scale of the present. It is but in accordance with human nature that we finally ask what is Maimonides for our own generation? The reply sounds sad in the extreme. The life work of Maimonides seems to be lost. Maimonides, the Halachist, intended to supersede the Talmudical literature by his more effective works, the Commentay on the Mishnah and his code the Mishne Thora. The first part has been successfully achieved without the co-operation of Maimonides. But the substitutes are hardly better known.

And even in the countries where the Talmud is still a power in life, the Halachic activity of Maimonides has brought forth the reverse of what it had aimed at. Maimonides intended to set aside by his works all preceding discussions, fruitless though brilliant. But instead of that he called forth a new enormous literature of mental equilibristics that probably would have thrown him into despair. As for the philosopher Maimonides, need I tell you that the fall of Aristotle is the fall of Maimonides? The stars of modern astronomy have grown infinitely in size, but the spectral analysis has torn their souls from out of them. The death of the stars caused the death of the Separate Intelligences and of the Active Intellect which connects the mind of man with God. So the tremendous building of Maimonides is lying in ruins.

But did you ever hear of the temple of the Sun-god in Palmyra? This temple was the greatest building of its time. Even in its ruins it remained so enormous that one of its corners granted sufficient space for a little town to establish itself. In Maimonides' building there are many corners which might grant shelter and rest to the "Perplexed" of our age. I am convinced that a thorough study of Maimonides' writings would reveal an abundance of thought which after some transformation might become of great value even for our modern time. But more than in its parts Maimonides' activity as a whole gives us a lesson of primary importance. The problem that faced Maimonides—the reconciliation of Judaism with non-Jewish culture — renews itself with every generation, especially since the visible bars between the

Jews and their environments have been dropped. The example of Maimonides teaches us that Judaism has nothing to fear from other cultures. The ideas of the twentieth century are not more opposed to our Judaism than the Aristotelian conceptions were to the Judaism of the twelfth century. Still they were absorbed and appropriated by Jewish doctrine. The example of Maimonides shows us also the ways and means of this appropriation. A real, a lasting, synthesis between modern culture and Judaism can be brought about only by one who is most intimately connected with Judaism. Philo of Alexandria twelve centuries previous to Maimonides had the same task to deal with, and tried even to solve it with precisely the same means, by allegorical interpretation. Still he entirely failed; his influence can be traced only in the doctrines of

Christianity, while Maimonides was revered by his own people as a saint. Maimonides mastered all branches of Jewish knowledge and Jewish life, while Philo was a stranger in the field of Judaism, and could not even read the Bible in the original. The reconciliation of Judaism with non-Jewish culture may be called an operation. But an operation demands a most intimate knowledge of anatomy. An operation cannot be performed by a barber. He would let his patient bleed to death. The operating surgeon besides must enjoy the complete confidence of the patient. He must endeavor to strengthen the patient's heart and raise his spirits to enable him to stand the operation with as little injury as possible. Let us therefore follow the example of the man whose seven hundredth anniversary we are celebrating to-night. Let us first make our people

know Judaism, let us make them love Judaism—and with a clear mind and a strong heart the Jewish nation can confidently await the future.

WIDENER
HN SBXH 0